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Marine Fisheries Advisory

**EMERGENCY ACTION TO REDUCE REGULATORY DISCARDS OF COD
IN A PORTION OF MASSACHUSETTS BAY NORTH OF BOSTON -**

RESTRICTIONS ON COMMERCIAL FISHING EFFECTIVE DEC. 16

Since the Gulf of Maine Groundfish Rolling Closure in Massachusetts Bay was lifted on December 1, Atlantic cod have been found aggregated in an area north of Boston adjacent to Nahant within a few miles from shore. At-sea monitoring and patrols have confirmed the presence of these extraordinarily high catches. Given concerns that the local abundance of cod combined with low trip limits (commercial trip limit = 500 lbs/day; recreational bag limit = 5 fish/angler) is resulting in unprecedented regulatory discards, *Marine Fisheries* will take several actions in the shaded rectangular area shown in the map below, effective Tuesday, December 16, 2003 through March 31, 2004.

The following rules will remain in effect in the referenced area (grey box on below map) from December 16, 2003 through March 31, 2004:

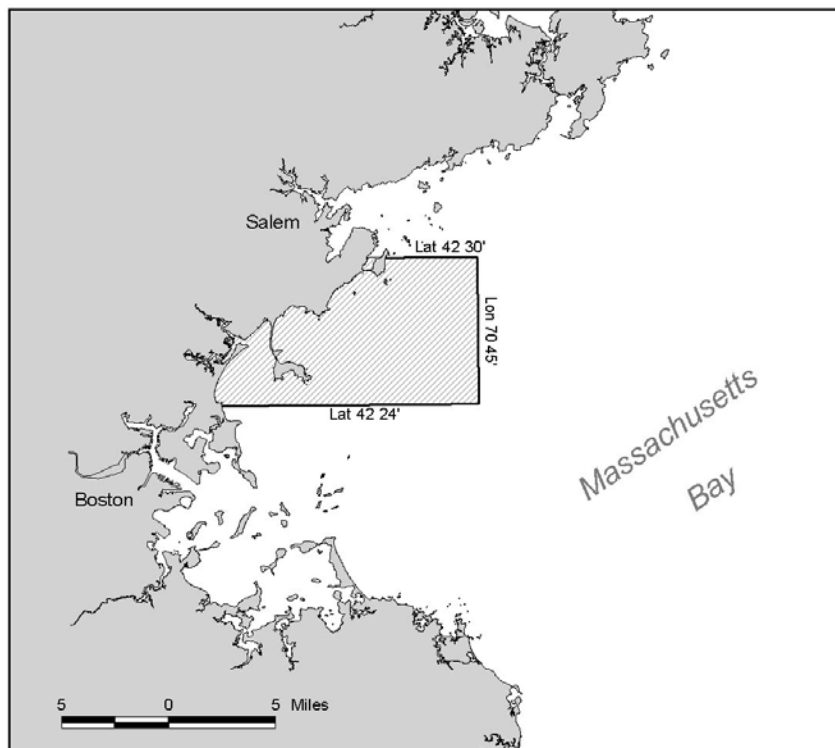
The following shall apply to gillnetters:

- ❖ Gillnetting is prohibited.
- ❖ Storing or abandoning gear in this area is also unlawful; all nets must be removed from the area by December 15.

The following applies to longliners:

- ❖ Prohibited from fishing more 500 hooks.
- ❖ Must use only circle hooks at least as large as 11/0.
- ❖ May fish only between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Besides these regulatory discards (fish that must be released in excess of the trip limit), *Marine Fisheries* has documented commercial catches well in excess of the trip limits and consequent discarding and high-grading. All commercial fishermen are reminded that these and other regulations protecting cod are vital to the rebuilding of this historic and valuable population. Violations of any of the rules designed to protect this sensitive stock will be dealt with severely and may include permit revocation and seizures.



This area extends from the shoreline eastward and is west of the 70 45' longitude, south of 42° 30' latitude, and north of 42 24' latitude.

For further information contact *Marine Fisheries* at 617 626-1520 or the Division of Law Enforcement at 978-283-7764.